

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 /073 W

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O R 111530Z SEP 78

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2490

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5350

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SF

SUBJECT: VORSTER'S HEALTH

1. EMBASSY ON SEPTEMBER 9 HEARD REPORTS THAT VORSTER WOULD BE REPLACED AS KEYNOTER AT THE TRANSVAAL PARTY CONGRESS BY P.W. BOTHA. THE SUNDAY PRESS, HOWEVER, REPORTED THAT VORSTER WOULD SPEAK AS PLANNED.

2. THIS MORNING (SEPTEMBER 11), THE LOCAL PRESS INDICATES THAT VORSTER WILL NOT, IN FACT, ADDRESS THE CONGRESS, NOR WILL HE CHAIR THIS WEEK'S CABINET MEETING SCHEDULED FOR TONIGHT, SEPTEMBER 11. MINISTER OF DEFENSE, P.W. BOTHA, WILL REPORTEDLY DELIVER THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AS HE DID IN THE CAPE AND FREE STATE CONGRESSES, AND ALSO CHAIR THE CABINET MEETING. "SENIOR NP SOURCES," ACCORDING TO THE RAND DAILY MAIL, SAID NO SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO BOTHA TAKING OVER AS KEYNOTER.

3. VORSTER'S ON-AGAIN, OFF-AGAIN KEYNOTE ADDRESS UNDERSCORES UNCERTAINTY ABOUT HIS HEALTH. OVER THE WEEKEND, ADDITIONAL
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JOURNALIST SOURCES ASSERTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS MORE SERIOUSLY ILL THAN ACKNOWLEDGED. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, HE IS REPORTEDLY SUFFERING FROM A COLLAPSED LEFT LUNG, HARDENING OF THE ARTERIES AND HIGH, AS OPPOSED TO HIS USUAL LOW, BLOOD PRESSURE. THE REPORTER SAID HE RECEIVED HIS INFORMATION FROM BOTH OPPOSITION AND NAT PARTY SOURCES. A LEADING NATIONALIST MP TOLD US TODAY THAT THERE WAS GROWING CONERN ABOUT THE PRIME

MINISTER'S HEALTH, BUT THERE WAS NO REASON TO BELIEVE HE WOULD STEP DOWN SOON. INSTEAD, ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, VORSTER WILL TAKE A PROLONGED REAST AND BEGIN A "PHASE OUT" THAT COULD LAST WELL INTO NEXT YEAR.

4. FOR CAPE TOWN, DURBAN, JOHANNESBURG: ANY INFORMATION YOU MAY GATHER REGARDING THE PM'S ILLNESS WOULD BE APPRECIATED. EDMONDSON

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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